

Decisions on Conditions, requirements and Guidance for GCSE astronomy



In December 2015 we published a consultation about the rules and guidance we proposed to put in place for reformed GCSEs in astronomy.

This consultation set out draft Subject Level Conditions, requirements and guidance which would apply to all reformed GCSEs in astronomy.

We have reviewed the responses to the consultation and are now announcing our decisions. We are also publishing a more detailed analysis of the responses alongside this document.¹

GCSE astronomy

Conditions and requirements

We proposed to require all reformed GCSEs in astronomy to:

- comply with the subject content requirements published by the Department for Education,² and with our assessment objectives;
- allocate at least 20 per cent of the total marks for assessing mathematical skills;
- allocate at least 15 per cent of the total marks for indirectly assessing knowledge and understanding of observational skills in the exams; and
- require centres to provide observational activity statements for students, listing work undertaken by each student during observational activities, and the knowledge, skills and understanding derived from them.

Most respondents supported our proposed Conditions and requirements, through some commented that the proposed minimum weighting of 15 per cent of marks allocated to the indirect assessment of observational skills within the exams was too low.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-reform-regulations-for-astronomy

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-astronomy>

We have considered respondents' views, however, our view remains that the minimum weighting of 15 per cent for the indirect assessment of observational skills within the exams is appropriate, is consistent with other GCSEs with similar requirements for practical work, and allows for a higher weighting to be adopted where this would be justifiable. The weighting for the indirect assessment of observational skills within the exams is expressed in our requirements as a minimum. It is therefore possible for reformed GCSEs in astronomy to allocate a higher weighting where it is appropriate to do so.

We have reviewed our proposed Conditions and requirements following consultation and are satisfied they are fit for purpose and consistent with our overall approach to reformed GCSEs. We have therefore decided to adopt all our Conditions and requirements unchanged, save for the correction of some minor typographical errors that have not changed the substance of our proposals.

Guidance

We proposed to introduce guidance on interpreting our assessment objectives.

Respondents broadly supported our proposed guidance, although some suggested ways we could improve the wording.

In response to these comments, we have decided to make changes to the drafting to clarify our expectations (and to ensure consistency with other GCSE subjects), but have not changed the substance of our proposals.

Next steps

We have published the following documents which set out our final rules and guidance for reformed GCSEs in astronomy:

- *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Astronomy*³
- *GCSE Subject Level Guidance for Astronomy*⁴

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-astronomy

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-guidance-for-astronomy